

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 3 June 2024

Title: Graffiti Project – Leys Wheeled Sports Park

Contact Officer: Project Officer

Background

The new Wheeled Sports Park (skatepark) was opened at the end of March 2024. The skatepark, has been hugely successful with large daily numbers and constant use outside of school hours and weekends. The skatepark is also attracting users from surrounding areas and has become a destination park due to its size and play value. However, the park has become a victim of its success, suffering with an increasing amount of graffiti. Whilst, it is an accepted part of the culture, some of the graffiti is offensive and ugly.

One of the council's objectives was to make the park welcoming to everyone and its feasible the offensive graffiti could prevent parents taking younger children to use the park.



(please note, the offensive graffiti is not pictured, which contains profanity)

Current Situation

To tackle the rise of graffiti vandalism in the park and to reignite the community sense of pride and ownership, officers would like to explore running a graffiti art competition during the summer, using the vertical walls as canvases for our local spray paint artists.

If favourable, Officers recommend the council provide a clear brief that focusses on; *colour, inclusivity, youth, environment & Witney*. This will help ensure artists have freedom of expression, but the council have artwork that is relevant to the objectives of our park.

To attract local artists, officers recommend that a prize of an iPad (with art features) is offered to the winner, who is chosen by councillors and mayor. Officers have researched online voting through social media, but there is a risk this could be manipulated, and an unfair result could be given.

The Town Council would communicate the competition through our normal channels (online, social media, noticeboards). Officers have engaged local skate enthusiast, Cory Compton, who supported the new park design and leads local skate groups. He believes this would be a good idea and knows several artists who would be interested in participating.

Benefits:

- Add colour and vibrancy to the park.
- Continue to attract users from all genders, ages and abilities.
- Promote Council community values.
- Re-ignite sense of pride and ownership within community.
- Opportunity for council to engage with younger community.
- Discourage and slow down the rise of ugly graffiti in the park – whilst officers cannot guarantee the artwork would not be defaced, the artwork could be covered in a protective coating, which would make graffiti easier to remove and not harm the original artwork.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

- Raise awareness of environment and potential issues

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

- Officers would ensure any competitions follow council protocols, Health and Safety is considered throughout and decisions are fair and transparent.
- Officers will ensure that competition is communicated effectively with clear brief and concise rules.
- Officers will ensure appropriate and timely communications are made to ensure community is aware of competition and closure of park.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates. Benefits provided by the above items are:

- Promotes inclusivity at the skatepark.
- Encourages younger users to enjoy park without risk of being exposed to profanities.
- Expresses and promotes Witneys core community values.
- Artwork will be appreciated by everyone visiting the Leys.
- Engages local artists and youth community.
- Improves sense of pride and ownership of park.

Financial implications

- Cost of prize (source apple store) = Apple iPad £349 (64gb, WIFI) + Apple Pencil £79 = **£428**
- Anti-Graffiti mural coating (Hydron Nu-Guard AG) = £114.53 x 2 bottles = **£229.06**
- This money would come from the Earmarked reserve for the Wheeled Sports Park, which currently sits at approx. £7000 and is intended to cover Park maintenance and activities.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. Running a graffiti competition at The Leys Wheeled Sports Park as outlined above.